



THE CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. TOWN,

CRITIC and CENSOR-GENERAL.

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----- Ordine gentis

Mores, et studia, et populos, et praelia dicam.

VIRG.



S I have assumed the character of CENSOR GENERAL; I shall follow the example of the old Roman Censor; the first part of whose duty was to review the people, and distribute them into their several Divisions: I shall therefore enter upon my office, by taking a cursory survey of what is usually called *The TOWN*. In this I shall not confine myself to the exact method of a Geographer, but carry the reader from one quarter to another, as it may suit my convenience, or best contribute to his entertainment.

WHEN a Comedian, celebrated for his excellence in the part of Shylock, first undertook that character, he made daily visits to the center of business, the 'Change, and the adjacent Coffee-houses; that by a frequent intercourse and conversation with "the unfore-skinn'd race," he might habituate himself to their air and deportment. A like desire

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of penetrating into the most secret springs of action in these people, has often led Me there; but I was never more diverted than at *Garraway's* a few days before the drawing of the lottery. I not only could read Hope, Fear, and all the various passions excited by a love of gain, strongly pictured in the faces of those who came to buy; but I remarked with no less delight, the many little artifices made use of to allure adventurers, as well as the visible alterations in the looks of the sellers, according as the demand for tickets gave occasion to raise or lower their price. So deeply were the countenances of these Bubble-Brokers impressed with an attention to the main chance, and their minds seemed so dead to all other sensations, that one might almost doubt, where money is out of the case, whether a Jew "has eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions."

FROM *Garraway's* it is but a short step to a gloomy class of mortals, not less intent on gain than the Stock-jobber: I mean the dispensers of life and death, who flock together, like birds of prey watching for carcases, at *Batson's*. I never enter this place, but it serves as a *memento mori* to me. What a formal assemblage of sable suits, and tremendous perukes! I have often met here a most intimate acquaintance, whom I have scarce known again; a sprightly young fellow, with whom I have spent many a jolly hour; but being just dubb'd a Graduate in Physick, he has gain'd such an entire conquest over the risible muscles, that he hardly vouchsafes at any time to smile. I have heard him harangue, with all the oracular importance of a veteran, on the possibility of *CANNING's* subsisting for a whole month on a few bits of bread; and he is now preparing a treatise, in which will be set forth a new and infallible method to prevent the spreading of the plague from *France* into *England*. *Batson's* has been reckon'd the seat of solemn stupidity: yet is it not totally devoid of taste and common sense. They have among them Physicians who can cope with the most eminent Lawyers or Divines; and Critics, who can relish the *sal volatile* of a witty composition, or determine

determine how much *fire* is requisite to *sublimate* a tragedy *secundum artem*.

EMERGING from these dismal regions, I am glad to breathe the pure air in St. Paul's Coffee-house: where (as I profess the highest veneration for our Clergy) I cannot contemplate the magnificence of the cathedral without reflecting on the abject condition of those "tatter'd crapes," who are said to ply here for an occasional Burial or Sermon, with the same regularity as the happier drudges, who salute us with the cry of "coach sir," or "chair your honour."

And here my Publisher would not forgive me, was I to leave the neighbourhood without taking notice of the Chapter Coffee-house, which is frequented by those encouragers of literature, and (as they are stiled by an eminent Critic) "not the worst judges of merit," the Book-sellers. The conversation here naturally turns upon the newest publications, but their criticisms are something singular. When they say a *good* book, they do not mean to praise the style or sentiment, but the quick and extensive sale of it. That book in the phrase of the CONGER is best, which sells most; and if the demand for QUARLES should be greater than for POPE, he would have the highest place on the rubric post. There are also many parts of every work liable to their remarks, which fall not within the notice of less accurate observers. A few nights ago I saw one of these gentlemen take up a Sermon, and after seeming to peruse it for some time with great attention, he declared "it was very good *English*." The reader will judge whether I was most surprised or diverted, when I discovered, that he was not commending the purity and elegance of the diction, but the beauty of the *type*, which, it seems, is known among the printers by that appellation. We must not however think the members of the CONGER strangers to the deeper parts of literature; for as Carpenters, Smiths, Masons, and all Handicraftsmen smell of the trade they labour at, Book-sellers take a peculiar turn from their connexions with books and authors. The character of the Bookseller is commonly
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formed on the writers in his service. Thus one is a politician or a deist; another affects humour, or aims at turns of wit and repartee; while a third perhaps is grave, moral, and sententious.

THE *Temple* is the barrier that divides the City and Suburbs, and the gentlemen who reside there seem influenced by the situation of the place they inhabit. Templers are, in general, a kind of citizen-courtiers. They aim at the air and mien of the drawing-room, but the holiday smartness of a apprentice, heightened with some additional touches of the rake or coxcomb, betrays itself in every thing they do. The *Temple* however is stock'd with it's peculiar beaux, wits, poets, critics, and every character in the gay world. And it is a thousand pities, that so pretty a society should be disgraced with a few dull fellows, who can submit to puzzle themselves with Cafés and Reports, and have not taste enough to follow the genteel method of studying the law.

I SHALL now, like a true Student of the *Temple*, hurry from thence to *Covent-Garden*, the acknowledg'd region of gallantry, wit, and criticism; and hope to be excused for not stopping at *George's* in my way, as the *Bedford* affords a greater variety of nearly the same characters. This Coffee-house is every night crowded with men of parts. Almost every one you meet is a polite scholar and a wit. Jokes and *bon mots* are echo'd from box to box; every branch of literature is critically examined, and the merit of every production of the press, or performance at the theatres, weighed and determined. This school (to which I am myself indebted for a great part of my education, and in which, though unworthy, I am now arrived at the honour of being a public lecturer) has bred up many authors, to the amazing entertainment and instruction of their readers. *Button's*, the grand archetype of the *Bedford*, was frequented by *Addison*, *Steele*, *Pope*, and the rest of that celebrated set, who flourished at the beginning of this century, and was regarded with just deference on account of the real geniuses who frequented it. But we can now boast men of superior abilities; men, who without any one

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acquired excellence, by the mere dint of an happy assurance, can exact the same tribute of veneration, and receive it as due to the illustrious characters, the Scribblers, Players, Fiddlers, Gamblers, that make so large a part of the company at the *Bedford*.

Now, since Mr. MACKLIN is not yet prepared to receive us, I shall take leave of *Covent-Garden*, and desire the Reader's company to *White's*. Here (as *Vanbrugh* says of *Locket's*) "He may have a dish no bigger than a saucer, that shall cost him fifty shillings." The great people, who frequent this place, do not interrupt their politer amusements, like the wretches at *Garraway's*, with business, any farther than to go down to *Westminster* one Sessions to vote for a Bill, and the next to repeal it. Nor do they trouble themselves with literary debates, as at the *Bedford*. Learning is beneath the notice of a Man of Quality. They employ themselves more fashionably at whist for the trifle of a thousand pounds the rubber, or by making bets on the lye of the day.

FROM this very genteel place the Reader must not be surpris'd, if I should convey him to a Cellar, or a common Porter-house. For as it is my province to delineate, and remark on mankind in general, whoever becomes my disciple must not refuse to follow me from the *King's-Arms* to the *Goose and Gridiron*, and be content to climb after me up to an Author's garret, or give me leave to introduce him to a Route. In my present cursory view of the TOWN I have indeed confined myself principally to Coffee-houses, tho' I constantly visit all places that afford any matter for speculation. I am a Scotchman at *Forrester's*, a Frenchman at *Slaughter's*, and at the *Cocoa-Tree* I am — an ENGLISHMAN. At the *Robin Hood* I am a Politician, a Logician, a Geometrician, a Physician, a Metaphysician, a Casuist, a Moralist, a Theologist, a Mythologist, or any thing—but an Atheist. Wherever the WORLD is, I am. You will therefore hear of me sometimes at the Theatres, sometimes perhaps at the Opera; nor shall I think the exhibitions of

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Sadler's

Sadler's Wells, or the Little Theatre in the *Haymarket*, beneath my notice; but may one day or other give a dissertation upon *Tumbling*, or (if they should again become popular) a critique on *Dogs* and *Monkeys*.

THOUGH the Town is the walk I shall generally appear in, let it not be imagined that Vice and Folly will shoot up unnoticed in the Country. My cousin VILLAGE has undertaken that province, and will send me the freshest advices of every fault or foible that takes root there. But as it is my chief ambition to please and instruct the Ladies, I shall embrace every opportunity of devoting my labours to their service: and I may with justice congratulate myself upon the happiness of living in an age, when the female part of the world are so studious to find employment for a CENSOR.

THE character of Mr. TOWN is, I flatter myself, too well known to need an explanation. How far, and in what sense, I propose to be a CONNOISSEUR, the learned reader will gather from my general Motto:

— — — *Non de villis domibusve alienis,
Nec male necne Lepos saltet; sed quod magis ad nos
Pertinet et nescire malum est, agitamus.* HOR.

AS CRITIC and CENSOR GENERAL, I shall take the liberty to animadvert on every thing that appears to me vicious or ridiculous; always endeavouring "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to Nature, to shew Virtue her own feature, Scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the Time his form and pressure."

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